

# The STAR OF BETHLEHEM

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THE reign of Herod had nearly ended when the Magi arrived in Jerusalem and asked: "Where is he that is born king of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him."

The news that a true "king of the Jews," a possible rival, was born, and that his birth had been heralded by celestial phenomena, caused Herod much concern. He summoned to him the scribes and learned men.

When they were questioned where the king was to be born they answered: "In Bethlehem of Judah; for thus it is written by the prophet, And thou, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, art not the least among the princes of Judah; for out of thee shall come a governor, that shall rule my people Israel." According to the authorized version it is then stated in the New Testament that "Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, inquired of them diligently what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also. When they had heard the king, they departed; and to the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy."

That is the whole story of the Star of Bethlehem as it is simply and directly told in the second chapter of the gospel according to St. Matthew.

It was a cloister fancy of the dark ages, handed down through centuries, that led the Christian world to regard the Star of the East as a miraculous luminary, akin to the pillar of fire that guided the children of Israel in the wilderness—a luminary especially created for the sole purpose of leading the Magi to the birthplace of Christ. The modern Christian is more apt to regard the star as a natural phenomenon and



to seek a scientific explanation of its sudden appearance, not for the purpose of casting doubt upon the narrative of Matthew, but of giving it astronomical support.

Who were these wise men, these Magi, of whom St. Matthew speaks? They came from the east, they said, and the east, according to the geographical knowledge of Matthew's day, was Chaldea, Persia, and that Arabian desert where the sons of Ishmael roamed. In that east of which they spoke, star-gazing was to some nations a religious observation, to others a mystical traditional rite. The pseudo-science of astrology out of which our modern science of astronomy was slowly evolved was thus engendered. Exegetes of the New Testament narrative hold these Magi to have been astrologers, members of that strange, non-national, privileged priesthood whose office it was to watch the sky each day and each night, to note the position and apparent motion of the sun from dawn to dusk, and to predict those changes in planetary positions which, in that day of astrological superstition, were supposed to shape and reveal the destinies of kings and nations. In them science came an early worshipper at the feet of Christ.

To ancient as well as mediaeval astrologers, certain groupings of the stars and planets had a fixed prophetic significance. The planets were named in accordance with their supposed influence. Mercury, always lurking near the sun, furtively gleaming in the morning or evening, was the patron of tricksters, knaves, and thieves. Mars, flaming in red, was the symbol of war, the guardian of heroes and warriors. If the Magi were astrologers who believed in stellar influences, the apparition of the Star of Bethlehem must have been an astronomical phenomenon. But no ordinary astronomical phenomenon could have enticed these practiced star-gazers from their temples. We must, therefore, find some celestial event sufficiently extraordinary to warrant a journey from Chaldea or Persia to Bethlehem.

When the Magi arrived in Jerusalem, Herod was within a few weeks of his death. The massacre of the babes of Bethlehem was one of his last cruel deeds. When he inquired diligently what time the star appeared, the reply was evidently such that he felt it necessary to kill all male infants "from two years old and under." It is probable, therefore, that the Magi first saw the star two years before their arrival in Jerusalem. Herod died in B. C. 4. Hence the Star of Bethlehem must have appeared about two years before that date. We must discover, if we



can, an exceptional stellar event near B. C. 6 with which it may be identified.

Johann Kepler, in his peculiar genius (for he showed that the births of Enoch, Moses, Cyrus, Caesar, Charlemagne, and Luther were preceded by important astrological events), led the way in calling attention to the astronomical phenomena that preceded the birth of Christ. He pointed out that there must have been a conjunction of the planets Jupiter and Saturn at about the time of Christ's birth, and even made a few preliminary calculations to prove his case. The conjunction occurred in the sign Pisces, from time immemorial identified with the destinies of Israel. A conjunction in that sign always signified the rising of some mighty master of the Jewish race. Such a conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn occurs once in about 800 years. It was, therefore, sufficiently extraordinary in Kepler's eyes to herald the birth of a Messiah.

Not until 1826 was Kepler's suggestion seriously considered by astronomers. In that year Professor Ideler, of Berlin, computed the positions of Jupiter and Saturn and proved that they were actually in conjunction in 7 B. C. His calculations showed that they at no time overlapped to form a single star, but that they were separated by a distance equal to the apparent diameter of the moon. Accordingly, Ideler had the temerity to suppose that the wise men saw the two planets as one star, because they were miraculously near-sighted. In justice to Ideler, it must be stated that he abandoned his theory when Encke, in 1831, repeated the calculations and found that the actual distance between Jupiter and Saturn, when nearest each other in B. C. 7, was more than the apparent diameter of the moon.

Apart from the fact that Jupiter and Saturn were never sufficiently near each other to be seen as one body, two planets in conjunction can hardly be called a star. Nor is it likely that experienced Chaldean astrologers would regard it. Moreover, there were other planetary conjunctions at about the same time. Professor Stockwell has demonstrated that a conjunction of Venus and Mars occurred on May 8th, B. C. 8, about fifty days less than two years before Herod's death. Because the mandate for the

slaughter of the infants was issued some time before Herod's death, Professor Stockwell advances the supposition that this conjunction was the Star of Bethlehem. Since conjunctions occurred so frequently, it is difficult to understand why more of them did not call forth Chaldean or Persian deputations.

Because of these fatal objections to any theory which regarded the Star of Bethlehem merely as a conjunction of two planets, the late Prof. R. A. Proctor cast about for other celestial phenomena and finally decided that the wise men might have been guided by a comet. There is much to be said in favor of the supposition. Comets are discovered nowadays at the rate of two or three a year. Not all of them are particularly brilliant; but it is not inconceivable that in biblical times comets occasionally appeared that were brilliant enough to strike terror into superstitious hearts. Indeed, before Edmund Halley proved that the law of gravitation applied to the comet which bears his name and which has revisited the earth at intervals of seventy-one and one-half to seventy-nine years, comets were regarded as divine messengers, as omens of good or evil, and particularly as harbingers of pestilence and war. To a poetic eastern people who revered the stars as symbols especially set in the heavens for the guidance of men, comets were undoubtedly awesome visitors. The Chaldeans, Persians and Jews were astronomically no more enlightened than the mediaeval Christians, and if at the fall of Constantine in 1453 all Christendom was alarmed at the appearance of a comet (a comet which we now know to have been Halley's), it is highly probable that the Orient was no less impressed by these sudden visitations. Comets, as it does, a nucleus, a "coma" or envelope surrounding the nucleus and measuring from twenty thousand to one million miles in diameter, and a long tail which streams behind the nucleus for sixty to a hundred million miles or more, a comet is one of the most mysteriously beautiful celestial apparitions that ever meets the eye. But whether or not the Star of Bethlehem really was such an apparition no one can affirm with certainty. An astronomer can merely state that the idea is not untenable and that it is less objectionable than the conjunction hypothesis.

Lastly, the theory has been proposed that the Star of Bethlehem was what is called a "new" star or "nova," a star which suddenly flares up in the heavens and fades away again to its former magnitude after the lapse of weeks or months. Such new stars are not altogether rare. Ten appeared between B. C. 134 and the end of the fifteenth century. Since the fifteenth century no less than sixteen have been recorded. In our own time they are discovered with fair frequency.

Even before the invention of the telescope such new stars were studied by astronomers. Apart from the astronomical evidence in favor of the theory that the Star of Bethlehem was a nova, poetically, at least, it seems singularly fitting that a matchless orb blazing forth in sudden magnificence should have marked not only the birth of a Messiah whose destiny it was to save mankind by his own suffering and to make this a new world by purging it of evil, but also the birth of a new sun with embryonic planets wheeling about it in shining clouds of gas and stellar dust.

read, admired, and revered him, all my life, and it will be a privilege, here, in his own town, to add my humble tribute to that of the world at large.

"Well, that's all right," responded the thrifty-looking citizen, "and we've no objection in particular to your doing so; but you mustn't be disappointed if you don't get any applause with it."

"Why?" I inquired. "Was he not idolized here in his own memory held in veneration? Has he not advertised this town all over the world?"

"Well, perhaps so," was the reply. "But after he died, we found out that he wasn't paying taxes enough or what property he owned, and, don't you see, it has kind of made him unpopular."

More Up to Date.

She enthusiastically—I think Paul Beach is just a perfect Garden of Eden, don't you?

He—Yes, but—oh—a little more—don't you think?—(laughter)

## BERLIN'S WEST END

Comforts That May Be Had In Kurfurstendamm.

Section of Germany's Capital as Seen in 1912—Hotels, Cafes and Business Buildings All Have Modern Equipment.

Berlin—Our European guide books are of little help if we wish to study the pulsating life of a modern city. There is in this respect hardly any difference between the English Murray, the French Joanne or the Baedeker made in Germany. They wish to give us a full list of the old established, hallmarked sights to which frequent allusions may be found in classical literature or modern fiction, but omit to take notice of the latest actualities. We are still directed by them to the Friedrichstrasse as the center of Berlin life. Such it was more than twenty years ago. As late as ten years ago the whirlpool of modern life was to be found at the Potsdamer platz, comparable to Piccadilly Circus in London. Nowadays it has shifted farther west to the long and broad avenue called Kurfurstendamm, says a Berlin correspondent. There we are in the "New West," the up-to-date part of the modern of all European cities. Modern is also the accommodation the visitor may now find there. The "Boarding Place" that has just been opened is neither a hotel of the accustomed style nor a boarding house, but something between the two. If you ask for a room, a plan is handed to you, from which you see what accommodation there is, with prices inserted. If you want lodging for a week, a fortnight, a month, a year, the scale goes considerably down in proportion to the length of your stay. But with your furnished room you get also the comfort of dining rooms, an elegant cafe, a first-class restaurant of the German beer garden style, and all those conveniences of an American hotel for reading, writing and passing the time. It is a big building, containing 500 bedrooms, besides the lavishly spacious suites for general use and the halls for festivities. We have dwelt on these particulars because they are in bearing with the character of this magnificent thoroughfare of a new city.

It is astonishing how quickly fashionable society has moved into these quarters. Already now these outskirts of the city have developed a life of their own. Kurfurstendamm is now for Berlin life what the Fosse is



Front of Imperial Palace at Berlin.

or Vienna or the "Stroeg" between Kongens to Nytorv for Copenhagen, the promenade of the stylish part of the population. Here we find also that bohemian element and a great deal of that extravagance of high life for which Paris is famous. Of course the shops followed their best customers. In the beginning the old houses of the city opened branches to the west; then new elegant magazines of the Regent street type were founded; now there is already a peculiar style of Kurfurstendamm shop architecture. Superior taste and artistic decorations are indispensable requisites for these shops. One need only peep into the numerous new coffee houses along the street to get a notion of Kurfurstendamm style. In order to compete with their rivals each of these restaurants had to develop a specialty that was likely to attract patronage; everywhere good music is an attraction given into the bargain. Artists and literary men meet at some favorite place, elegant as the fast set at another. The 8 o'clock tea attracts in the same rooms quite another class of people than you would find later in the evening. You see here crowded together what a generation ago was apparently missing in Berlin, people of vast means and with plenty of time. It is therefore quite understandable that the new term of Berlin, W. W., i. e. the extreme west of Berlin, means the upper ten thousand as far as wealth and luxury go.

## MURRY BALKS AT PHOTOGRAPH

Women Members of Kansas Panel Refuse to Have Their Picture Taken.

Eldorado, Kan.—When Otis Boston, a photographer, attempted to take a picture of a jury composed of women in the county court here, his wife, who was on the jury, promptly left the box. She was followed by one of the other women and the two protesting jurors refused to return until they were assured by the court that no picture would be taken. Mrs. Boston does not believe that women should serve as jurors, but her husband favors the innovation.

## NATIONAL CAPITAL AFFAIRS

### Feared Nebraska May Succeed Texas as Hoodoo



WASHINGTON.—"Naval officers are guessing whether the United States battleship Nebraska, which ran upon an uncharted shoal a short time ago, is going to take the place of the ill-fated Texas, later named San Marcos, which was the hoodoo ship of the navy," remarked Captain L. L. Darbey, a retired naval officer, the other day. "All luck pursued the Texas almost from the beginning, and it seemed that it was never out of trouble during all the time it was in commission, except at the battle of Santiago, where it did great work."

"Before the Spanish-American war the Texas while being overhauled at the Brooklyn navy yard was sunk, because the yokes of its sea cocks were broken in the course of repairs, and the water poured in just as if the boat had been scuttled. The Texas sank, as everybody knows, and was raised as soon as possible. It was on that occasion that Captain Jack Phillips, one of the bravest and best naval

officers, by the way, that ever trod a bridge, had some fun with fighting Bob Evans, at that time commanding the Iowa. When the Texas was raised it was found that in the hull were thousands of eels that had been sucked through the open sea cocks. Knowing Captain Evans's fondness for eels Phillips had a lot of them sent over to the Iowa. He was somewhat surprised a day later to receive a note of acknowledgment from his brother officer, which read: 'The eels were fine, Jack; sink her again.'

"It was Jack Phillips, you may remember, who, after the great naval battle of Santiago, when the Spanish battleships were lying on the shores of Cuba smoking from the shot of the American ships, solemnly said to his men: 'Don't cheer, boys; the poor devils are dying.'

"Jack Phillips was one of the bravest, and at the same time most religious, naval officers I ever knew. He was the direct opposite of Bob Evans, but the two were great friends. The Texas, you know, was afterward named the San Marcos, and was the target for gun practice a few months ago. It was a fitting end for a good old ship that had always been in hard luck, except at the time when it was most needed. I say, I wonder if the Nebraska is going to take the place of the Texas as the hoodoo ship of the navy?"

### Enterprising Sam Conserves the Natural Resources

IF Sam Lee should put a big gilt sign bearing the words, "Electrical Chinese Laundry," on the front of his little shop, at 3108 Fourteenth street, Northwest, any time in the near future, his customers in Mount Pleasant would not be at all surprised.

In fact, a number of those who instruct their neglect to the tender ministrations of the affable Celestial have been wondering for some time why Sam has neglected such a splendid opportunity for a bit of advertising.

But although Sam has been rejuvenated to the extent where he realizes that electrical power is much stronger, cheaper, and more efficient in the long run than the muscles and sinews of the human arms and back, he has not awakened to the wonders of the "ada."

Sam is a typical specimen of the "new" Chinaman—the product of that stirring spirit which caused the ancient empire to become transformed into a republic in a remarkably short period, and with the loss of only a few hundred heads and other incidentals.

Sam is wide-awake and alert, and in the "Melican slang" he is "on the



job." Therefore, when an enterprising salesman revealed the wonders of a new and ingenious device for ironing clothes at the cost of but little perspiration, less physical energy, practically no mental waste, and only a few cents a day in the cost of power, Sam said: "I buy him."

Now Sam irons with an electrical iron which saves him so many hundreds of steps a day between the stove and his ironing table. Further, the iron is so arranged that by pulling a string he releases a weight which bears down on the top of the iron and relieves him of that duty. Better still, the pulling of another string lifts the iron just the right height above the board and Sam does not have to lift it and put it on the old-fashioned iron holder.

### He Wants a Wife, and Wants Her Double-Quick



AUGUST SEYMORE, otherwise known as August Schaeffelsky de Mukkadel de Castellane, one time dentist to the bey of Tunis and his harem, wants a wife, and wants her double-quick. He has from now until January 1 to persuade an American girl to marry him, or he will forfeit a legacy of \$150,000 promised by a California woman.

An aunt, formerly of Oakland, Cal., told him five years ago that if he would earn "something worth while and capture an American for a wife," she would give him \$150,000.

Seymore is a relative of the Castellane family made famous by the marital difficulties of Count Pon.

He is now in Washington, where he expects to remain until he finds "the woman" that his aunt told him he must have before he is entitled to her money. He has lectured, written, practiced dentistry and served in the French army. In a wife he would have a chum.

"I used to believe in my mother's view of marriage—the marriage of the eyes—but I have come to the view of the marriage of reason," said Seymore. "Mother said that marriage progressed from the stage of catching, or buying, a woman to the wooing of a woman regarded in a nobler sense, and the winning of the wife."

"Now I feel that the marriage of the eyes is the result of the sentimentality of youth and immaturity. Better is that marriage where the couple are partners, sharing everything alike. I don't believe in the marriage where the man has the money and forces his wife to ask him for every cent she gets."

"Rather, there should be a balance of power, so that the man and the woman are on an absolutely equal footing as regards money, morals, pleasures and sorrows."

### In Doubt as to Mr. Wilson's Mode of Locomotion

JUST at present Washington is wondering whether it will soon behold a president of the United States rolling leisurely by on his bicycle. It has just come out that the president-elect is fond of that manner of locomotion. He has gone on his vacation, and proposes to spend a part of it riding on his wheel. He has pedaled over many miles of English and continental roads in this fashion and likes it.

Time was when Washington was filled with eminent men and women on wheels, but they have all vanished save one, Assistant Secretary of State A. A. Ades. He is the permanent assistant secretary of state, a man who sticks to his own notions about things. Every summer he voyages to Europe and spends a month or so bicycling to places of interest. He and the new president should establish cordial relations very early.

If as president Gov. Wilson wants to "bike" around Washington, he will not want for good roads. They stretch in every direction, except toward Virginia. The secret service men who guard him, of course, would also have



to be mounted, but that is only an incident. They have been accustomed to following the president on motorcycles and sometimes in an automobile of their own. If the new president takes to bicycling, however, official Washington will do likewise. That is a way official Washington has. If Gov. Wilson goes out much on wheels, it will not be long before ambassadors and ministers and secretaries and military attaches will also be pedaling along the sleekly-oiled roads and dodging automobiles. Cabinet officials and congressmen will do likewise. The revival of bicycling among the well-to-do may be expected somewhat all over the country.

### Stizing Him Up.

When you call the average young man honest he is likely to feel a mild sort of gratification. When you call him competent his chest begins to bulge. When you call him a heart-breaker he slaps you on the shoulder and gives you to understand that he considers you a person of remarkable perception and unerring judgment.

### Daily Thought.

A man should never be ashamed to own his loss. In the wrong which he has done, in the wrong which he is doing, in the wrong which he is to do, he is wiser today than he was yesterday.—Pope.

### Reason for Superiority.

The domestication of animals and the utilization of plants does not go very far except under a civilized people. Contrast the age of Peru and Mexico with that of Egypt, Babylonia and China; and one reason for old-world superiority in the mastery of nature is plain.

### A La Mode.

"What was the chief food of the woodchoppers in whose camp you spent your vacation?" "Pork and potatoes, served in the form of chops and chips."—Christian Science Monitor.

## Overshadowed Poet's Fame

Thrifty Fellow-Citizen of Whittier Pointed Out Blot on His Memory.

Will Carleton, in a speech before the Writer's club, related the following reminiscence of a visit to the poet Whittier's old home:

"I was billed to lecture one evening at the town which had been for

long years the home of the Good Quaker poet. Just before I went over to the hall, a thrifty-looking citizen accosted me.

"Will you probably say anything in praise of Mr. Whittier, tonight?" he asked, after a few general remarks.

"Why, yes," I replied. "I had thought of referring to him, and in a very complimentary way. I have

read, admired, and revered him, all my life, and it will be a privilege, here, in his own town, to add my humble tribute to that of the world at large."